MRS. MAKONEY OF THE TENEMENTS

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MRS. MAHONEY OF THE TENEMENT

"MY HEART BEATS TRUE FOR YOU AN' NO OTHER" IT SAYS UNDER THE LACE

MRS. MAHONEY OF THE TENEMENT

BY
LOUISE MONTGOMERY

ILLUSTRATED BY
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THE STRANGER

"Where is my home?
Where is my home?
Waters thro' its meads are streaming,
Mounts with rustling woods are teeming,
Vales are bright with flowerets rare,
Oh, earth's Eden, thou art fair!
Land of beauty, dear Bohemia,
Thou art my home, my fatherland!
Thou art my home, my fatherland!"

Bohemian National Hymn.

I

THE STRANGER

WHERE is my home?" Through the open window of the cottage next to The Tenement came the plaintive notes, long drawn out, tender and wistful, sung with almost the slow dignity of a church hymn after the manner of the Bohemian peasant woman when she sings her national song. It is a sad melody, echoing in a free country the cry of an old-world nation in its conflict, and today it seemed to fill the air with the longing of a homesick

soul, the call of an endless desire in the pathos of its repeated query.

"Why is she always singing that outlandish song?" asked Mrs. Mooney from her position on the lowest step.

Mrs. Mahoney tapped her forehead significantly.

"Have ye niver heard?" she cried, with her joy in the prospect of telling a story showing in every line of her old wrinkled face.

"I raymimber the first time I iver see her, seven year gone, before we come to The Tiniment. She come over here from Europe, from some out-of-the-way place they call Bohemia, to marry a fine strappin' fellow iv her own kind with good wages in the Yards. He sint for her, and I don't

wonder at him. She was pretty, like a wild rose in old Ireland, for all she come from that strange country. Faith, there's wan time whin all girls looks alike, God bless us! 'Tis whin the wedding bells are ringin' in their ears and the heart sings the tune the good Lord started in the Garden iv Eden — bad luck to all thim as can't kape it singin'. They begin their housekeepin' in the front iv the new tiniment next to me own, an' I see it was all as it shud be with both iv thim.

"By an' by, a baby laughs in her arms an' she was prettier'n iver. Yes, now, I say she was," persisted the old woman in answer to the skeptical look of Mrs. O'Leary, who was sitting with two babies in her lap. "She was

prettier'n iver. It was a boy, as the first shud be, an' the father, he was that proud — faith, I see him stoop his head to get in at the front door!

"'Tis a happy time whin the young childher are in ye'er arms, an' ivery mother knows that, but it can't last. The boy had to grow an' another come to take his place, an' thin another wan afther him. 'Tis the way iv the world, an' a good way it is afther all. Yet I see the eyes iv the father smile at the first-born, an' I knew where the heart iv him was biding.

"Wurra, wurra, 'tis a hard tale to tell. The little boy, he was fond iv thim street-car tracks, an' he used to pull a little engine his father had bought for him an' tied to a long string so the

"SHE WAS PRETTIER'N IVER"

child cud pull it on the sidewalks, but the boy loved to run to thim tracks unbeknown for the space iv a minute. Manny's the day he says to me, 'I'll be a street-car man whin I grow up, an' ring the bell loud.' Perhaps he grew bold playin' in these city streets (the Divil tak' thim for a playground for the childher) an' wan day the little engine got stuck in the tracks an' he stooped down to pull it out, like anny child, not hearin' the sound iv the car.

"I was the first to reach him, an' the crowd followed close at the heels. Iverybody was talkin' at wanst, an' the conductor was takin' names in a book, an' the motorman was cryin' like a baby an' swearin' in the same breath how it wasn't his fault. All at wanst

some woman cried out — 'Stand back — the mother!' I see she was comin', all innocent-like, an' I pushed me way out to her. 'Who's hurt?' says she, kind iv anxious, for she'd a tender heart for childher. 'I can't stay,' says she, 'for I left me childher alone in the back yard.' Faith, me tongue stuck to the roof iv me mouth, an' 'twas the same with ivery wan iv us on the street. Mebbe it was the stillness spoke to her. Thin she caught sight iv the long string iv that little broken engine, an' gave wan cry. Mother iv God, may I niver hear another like it!"

The old woman paused and wiped her eyes with the hem of her apron.

"The child was dead?" gasped Mrs. O'Leary.

"Dead."

"And she went off her head then?"

"'Twas no other time. An' ivery year since that day has her good man moved, thinkin' mebbe to shake her mind a bit with the change."

There was a long silence on the steps, but still the music floated through the little window, falling upon the unheeding ears of the children of seven nations playing in the street.

"How did she come by that piano?" asked Mrs. Mooney, who could not bear a painful stillness.

"The piano?" said Mrs. Mahoney. "Oh, that was left to her by a brother who'd come over to kape a saloon. He died, poor fellow, an' there was no other kin in this country. A blessin'

to her poor head it's been, but they do be sayin' he's talked iv sellin' it, times are that hard for thim."

Within the cottage a slender young woman sat at her loved instrument repeating the familiar strain, for to her the song had no end, like the circle of her thought, ever coming to the point from which it started and beginning over again. Softly her long fingers touched the loose yellow keys of the old piano that sent forth at intervals unexpected vibrations as of a broken string. At such moments the singer faltered, and a slight frown disfigured her fair, smooth forehead, but as the rippling accompaniment caught the melody, lightly supporting and moving it on to its mournful ending, she smiled

a sad, patient smile and looked into the distance with brooding eyes, the embodiment of that pathetic appeal in the national song of her own people.

A long, shrill whistle from the Yards aroused her. She put her hand to her head and looked about with a bewildered air. Then she rose, and with quick gentle movements set about preparing the supper. Her husband found her a moment later looking anxiously along the pantry shelves and pushing small articles to the right and left.

"What is it, Mary?" he asked.

"The meat. I do not find it."

"There is none tonight," he replied abruptly.

"Oh, you do not wish it?" she asked, smiling at him. "Then it is well.

There is enough of the bread and coffee and potatoes ready."

The two children came in from the back yard and she placed them at the table. They laughed over the warm potatoes and the thick slices of buttered bread sprinkled with sugar, and she smiled at them. The husband ate hurriedly and walked to the window, where he stood looking dully out into the street. She came and stood beside him, and he stroked her soft brown hair.

"I can't do it," he muttered. "I can't do it."

"You are troubled?" she asked softly.

"Mary," he said, "Mary, I must tell you something. Try and understand."

His voice was harsh and loud as if force and intensity of tone could penetrate an ear that heard without comprehending.

"It's dull in the Yards. It'll be dull all summer. We're on short time and short pay till things pick up again in the fall. I've got to hold the job. It's the best I can do now. It's been hard all winter to keep things going. I've been thinking we could sell the piano. I've had a good offer. I'll buy you another and a better one soon, Mary, soon." Then as he saw the bewildered look creep into her face, he clenched his fists. "Mary, I'll get you another somehow, if I'm damned for it!"

She looked at his face, drew out a

handkerchief, and gently wiped the sweat from his forehead.

"You are troubled," she repeated. "What is it you want?"

"To sell the piano, I tell you. To sell — the piano. There's no other way out of it."

"Do what you please. You are always good," she said in her soft voice. "Shall I sing for you?"

He groaned and dropped into a chair, leaning his elbows on his knees and covering his face with both of his large hands.

"Where is my home?"

At the familiar call the children climbed down from their chairs and ran to their mother, watching her face, and trying to repeat the words as they

fell from her lips. The man sat with bowed head, but the singer smiled as the child may smile, and only by this outward sign give evidence of a joyous mystery within.

There was a sound of heavy steps at the front entrance, and the music stopped. A burly man pushed in the half-open door without knocking. Three others followed. The husband nodded and pointed to the piano. Mary looked from him to the men, but made no protest as he gathered up the old green flannel cover with its border of red roses, and laid the book of Bohemian songs on the shelf under the clock.

"Say, I'm sorry for this," said one of the men, with a hesitating glance at

the wife. "If we could help you out" —

"Oh, that's all right," said the husband brusquely. "Get out with it as quick's you can."

It was gone. He turned awkwardly to the empty side of the room.

Mary glided past him and began pulling at the oblong table that held the album, the tall vase, and the little front room ornaments purchased long ago from the Italian vender of images. He caught her idea and together they lifted it into the great emptiness. Then she carefully placed her chair and sat down, lightly touching the wooden table with the tips of each one of her long fingers, as if she were testing the keys to see what response they would

make to her appeal. In the beginning a troubled look passed over her face, but as she awoke the memory of the familiar accompaniment, the smile returned, and from her lips the old song leaped forth:

"Where is my home?
Where is my home?
Waters thro' its meads are streaming,
Mounts with rustling woods are teeming,
Vales are bright with flowerets rare,
Oh, earth's Eden, thou art fair!
Land of beauty, dear Bohemia,
Thou art my home, my fatherland!
Thou art my home, my fatherland!"

THE GREEN CARPET

II

THE GREEN CARPET

"SHE is yet young," said Mrs. Hoesing. "It is best that you go up and make out how they're getting on."

"'Tis worryin' ye all are, an' that for a bit iv sickness the Lord sinds to ivery wan iv us for a trial iv endurance," said Mrs. Mahoney, "but I'll be goin'."

The old woman left her breakfast dishes unwashed on the kitchen table and hurried around to the "second flat front." On the landing she paused a

moment and put her ear to the keyhole. This proved unsatisfactory and she knocked softly.

Mrs. Mooney stepped out quickly, closing the door behind her and keeping her hold on the knob.

"An' how is he this mornin', dearie?" asked Mrs. Mahoney.

"Oh, I've give up, Mrs. Mahoney," said the young woman. "I've give up all hope."

"No, no, darlin'," said Mrs. Mahoney, soothingly. "'Tis too soon for that. Ye'er husband's young to die, an' a strong built man too. Ye'er tired. Leave me take ye'er place for a bit while ye rest."

Mrs. Mooney shook her head. "The dog howled all night. You know what

that means — and there's been knockings on the wall. He's called!"

Mrs. Mahoney was silent before these certain omens of coming death.

"He's been a good husband to you," she said, putting both arms around her friend, "an' ye'll have to do ye'er best for him. Whin me Johnnie died, the boy that was the pride and joy iv me life, I had such a funeral as made the neighbors say to me, 'Missis Mahoney, ye've done ye'er duty handsome, an' nobody can say a word.'"

"Yes, yes," sobbed the young woman. "Jim was a good man — none better — and I'll do my best, what with the insurance from the lodge, but — but — I don't see how a body is going to have a decent funeral in the

front room without a scrap of carpet on the floor."

"True for ye, true for ye," admitted the old woman slowly. "'Tis not fit for all the neighbors to see — thim that's across the road, an' beyond. Some wud be talkin'."

"I know it. I know it. They're that mean, and themselves no better off than they might be," cried Mrs. Mooney bitterly.

"Cud ye manage now on small payments?" suggested Mrs. Mahoney.

The tearful face of the other woman brightened.

"Would you — would you — if you was me?"

"To be sure I wud," replied Mrs. Mahoney heartily. "We'll go now.

THE OLD IRISH WOMAN AND THE YOUNG WIFE WERE HASTENING DOWN THE STREET

Betther done at wanst. 'Tis a Friday now, an' ye'er sure to be ready be Sunday, in case" — she stopped and nodded significantly in the direction of the sick man's room.

A faint sound came through the closed door. "He's calling me," said the wife hurriedly. "You ask Mrs. Hoesing to step in while we're out. He'll never know the difference after he's had the medicine. The doctor give it for quieting the pains when he calls out like that."

Mrs. Mahoney descended the stairs to consult with Mrs. Hoesing. Five minutes later the old Irishwoman and the young wife were hastening down the street, bent on reaching the largest department store of the neighborhood.

"Red is a good color for wear," declared Mrs. Mahoney, with her small head bent in the critical position of the woman who knows.

"You are quite right, madame," said the clerk, bowing to her as he deftly twisted the roll to display another yard, "and always in good taste."

"It don't seem just right now," murmured Mrs. Mooney. "Seems as if green would be better."

"Certainly," assented the clerk graciously. "Green is the favorite color this year. You can't do wrong to buy green. You can see we are making a special price on this." He quickly turned another roll into the open space.

Mrs. Mahoney took the green carpet

in both hands and whipped it as she whipped her towels before hanging them on the line.

"A good test iv a carpet," she whispered to Mrs. Mooney. "Don't leave him think ye'er over anxious, but 'tis a bargain and best settled at wanst."

The arrangements were made for a cash deposit of two dollars, to be followed by monthly payments of the same amount during a period of one year, and the two women passed out into the street.

"What if the insurance don't hold out for everything?" exclaimed Mrs. Mooney, stopping suddenly to seize her companion by the arm. "I don't rightly know how much Jim's got!"

"Ye'll soon be findin' out," came

the reply. "Besides 'tis done now an' 'tis the only way ye'd iver get it. 'Tis ye'er duty to bury him rayspectible."

The old woman's words were caught up in the roar of two passing cars, and there was no further talk till they reached The Tenement. They stopped a moment at the front door and a new fear took possession of Mrs. Mooney.

"Suppose — suppose the clerk don't get it here on time," she faltered. "We didn't tell him nothing."

"Niver fear. He'll do it, an' if be anny chance he slips up, thin I'll" —

Footsteps were heard coming down the stairs, and a tall man with a black hand-bag stepped suddenly out of the dark hallway.

"Glad to see you out in the air, Mrs. Mooney," he said cordially. "Get out a few minutes every day now till your husband is about again."

"Oh, doctor," cried Mrs. Mooney hysterically, "is he — is he really going to get well?"

"Of course he is," replied the doctor. "Don't get excited. You've taken good care of him and the worst is over. He'll be as good as new in a couple of weeks."

THE UNIVERSAL NEED

III

THE UNIVERSAL NEED

DID I iver tell ye how I gave me old man a Valentine party?" asked Mrs. Mahoney.

"You never did," replied Mrs. Hoesing, gravely.

"But you're going to," said Mrs. Mooney, reaching for another lump of sugar.

"They'se nothin' like tay," resumed Mrs. Mahoney, refilling the three cups. "It warms ye up for the present an' makes ye raymimber the good times

past, an' gives a rosy light to the unsartin' future."

The other women were silent. They had learned from experience that when a story was brewing in the old woman's mind she would need no urging to bring it forth.

"'Twas just such another day as this," she began, "an' that made me think iv it. The cold wind drove the sleet an' the snow to the heart, an' there was small reason to be joyful with me old man out iv work since the Christmas an' the landlord gettin' onaisy about the rint, which is a way with thim landlords, an' me gettin' sight iv the bottom iv the tay-can whin I wint to get a pinch to warm the marrow iv me old bones.

"An' the worst iv it was me old man was fair disheartened. Ivery mornin' he wint out with his gray head droopin' like an old ox under a heavy yoke. An' he says to me, 'I'm gettin' old an' nobody wants me anny more.' 'Go 'long with ye,' says I. 'Ye're as young an' likely lookin' a man as I lay me eyes on annywhere on the street,' says I, for ye know, whin trouble comes 'tis always the woman must cheer up."

"'Tis so," assented Mrs. Hoesing.

"Why is it?" asked Mrs. Mooney. "Why is it? and we what they call the 'weaker sex,' and men always putting themselves first, and so full of the brag."

"'Tis strange," continued Mrs. Mahoney, "but so it is, an' so ivery

woman finds it out come soon or late. I see how things was goin' whin he niver smiled at me jokin', an' I says to meself, 'Something's got to be done!' Thin be a sudden inspiration iv the Saint iv the Day, I looked up at the Christmas calendar hangin' on me wall, an' see it was the fourteenth day iv this same month, an' good St. Valentine's Day at that. 'Sure an' I'll have a Valentine party,' I says to meself."

"And how long ago was it a white-haired old woman like you was courting the Patron Saint of Love and Youth?" interrupted Mrs. Mooney.

"Why not, if it was just for her husband?" interposed Mrs. Hoesing so seriously that Mrs. Mahoney broke into a delightful chuckle.

"Niver ye mind. Sure 'twas not the first Valentine party. I've seen parties in me day an' no lack iv partners for the dancin'. Wurra, wurra, the good Saint give me the thought, but where was the money? For me pocket-book was 'as empty as the dreams iv youth,' as the poet says."

"You might have got credit," suggested Mrs. Mooney.

"Ye'er partly right an' not altogether wrong. 'Tis no shame to tell ye iv the few times in me life whin I borrowed money from thim as wudn't be missin' it if I was to call for me funeral sudden an' lave a small debt for me only raymimbrance. 'Twas a cold day, as I was tellin' ye, an' I bundled me figure in a big shawl an'

with me head up as high as me bent shoulders cud carry it, I wint straight to the charity office. Wurra, wurra, there was manny a poor soul shiverin' in the outer room that day an' lookin', the Lord help thim, as if they'd been stealin' sheep. But I want to tell ye now, 'tis not the way to go for a small favor in the winter. I walked be the shakin' group straight into the next room an' up to the head lady sittin' in a kitchen chair an' playin' with a lot iv cards with names on thim. We'd done business together afore, an' she knew me, an' I knew her. She was the trim and tidy sort, for all the world like wan iv these pictures hangin' in the shops in the spring with the sign, 'Tailor-made,' under thim. But she'd

a kind heart an' I asked her without a blush or anny kind iv excuses to lind me the loan iv three dollars an' a half."

"You didn't get it," said Mrs. Mooney. "They never give money at such places."

"Not without you answer all manner of questions you'd sooner die than tell them," explained Mrs. Hoesing.

"As I was tellin' ye," continued the old woman, calmly, "we'd done business afore an' me reputation was good for returnin' small change. She looked at me an' asked if it was really necessary I shud take the cash, hintin' perhaps she cud do some other way, but I turned her off iv that quick an' sudden. 'Tis a cold day whin old Kathleen Mahoney lets annybody else

order beans an' useless charity truck for her. 'Haven't I always returned cash for cash?' I asked her, holdin' up me head an' lookin' her square in the eye.

"'Yes, I know ye have,' says she, gentle-like, but with a suspicion iv mistrust in the waitin'. Ye see, she'd been down to me house an' I'd invited her into the front room an' give her a cup iv tay like anny dacent woman, so she got it into her head me an' the old man lived pretty well for folks called poor. 'Ye've always returned the money ye've borrowed, but ain't ye just a little bit improvident,' says she, 'or ye wudn't be out again so soon,' says she. Thin I explained how me old man was out iv work since the blessed

Christmas Day an' the money was most necessary, 'for the universal need,' says I.

"'True,' says she, 'but ye certainly spend money pretty good whin ye have it. I noticed all the new things in ye'er front room,' says she, 'an' that fine green carpet.' 'Mother iv God,' says I, interruptin' most impolite, 'to think ye shud notice wan green carpet — the same I'd bought twinty year back for me grandmother's funeral. Besides,' says I, 'what's wan green carpet in the month iv February. Ye can nayther ate it nor wear it!'

"With that she took a slight coughin' spell an' wint to her drawer an' drew out the three dollars an' a half. I signed the paper she made an' left me

blessin' with her an' wint back to the room where the poor divils sat shiverin' in a row. 'Hold up ye'er heads, ye blitherin' idiots,' I says to thim. 'Hold up ye'er heads,' but I doubt if they did."

"The Italian woman once told me the Charities never help a body with a clean front room," said Mrs. Mooney.

"That's as it is," replied the old woman. "Annyhow 'twas but a business transaction I was askin'. I had the money an' I stopped at the drug store to look over thim valentines. 'Twas hard choosin'. The real wans with the lace an' the rosebuds an' the gold verses come high. I lay out three — fifty cents, siventy-five, an' wan dollar. Sure it was no manner iv use. The dollar wan beat, an' I took it.

At the end iv the gold verse I put me secret mark. 'Twas a sign in the letthers that passed between us whin we was promised, an' that was long ago. 'Will ye be so good as to address it?' I asks the clerk, because I wanted the handwritin' mysterious. 'Where to?' says he, polite enough. 'To Mr. John Patrick Mahoney,' says I, givin' the street number. Thin I give him two cents for the stamp an' wint out an' put it in the box. 'Twas not tin o'clock an' I knew it wud come to the house afore night."

"A dollar for a valentine!" mused Mrs. Hoesing, shaking her head.

"To be sure," asserted Mrs. Mahoney, unabashed. "Whin ye are doin' a good work, ye shudn't spare the ex-

pense. I figured there was enough left for the eatin' an' drinkin' for a small company, an' I stopped on the way back to give out a few polite invitations to the neighbors to drop in for the evenin', not forgettin' to buy the pretzels for me German frinds, an' a bit iv stew for supper. At home I did a small bakin' iv cakes an' straightened the house. About five o'clock the postman comes with a letther for Mr. John Patrick Mahoney, which same I lays aside on a high shelf. At six me old man comes in with his head hangin'. ''Tis no use,' says he, an' stops in his tracks like a spent brute.

"'Come to supper,' says I.

"'Where did ye find a supper?' says he.

"'In me imagination first,' says I, 'an' thin it materialized with meself for the medium.'

"'Go 'long with ye'er foolin',' says he, but I see he cud eat, an' ye niver need lose hope for anny man so long's he can put away a meal.

"Thin he took his pipe an' leaned back against the kitchen wall on the two legs iv the chair, an' smoked paceful while I washed the taycups an' searched the corner iv me brain for the next word.

"'Wud ye enjoy a mug iv beer for the evenin'?' says I.

"'I wud that,' says he.

"'Thin go an' get it,' says I, 'not forgettin' the frinds that are comin' for a party this night,' says I.

"'What!' says he, an' come down hard on the two front legs iv the chair.

"'A few iv the neighbors signified their intintion iv comin' in to enjoy the evenin' with us,' says I, 'so I made the bakin' iv cakes an' ye must go for the beer.'

"'Are ye crazy, woman?' says he, turnin' his empty pockets inside out.

"'Not yet,' says I, drawin' a dollar from me own pocket.

"'Where did ye get it?' says he, anxious like, for he's a good man, is John Patrick Mahoney, an' none bet-ther.

"'Am I not ye'er true an' honorable wife?' says I, takin' a line from a play we saw wanst in a theater.

"'They'se a daceitfulness in all

women,' says he, noddin' behind his pipe. 'All the poets an' the play-writers have it so.'

"'I doubt it,' says I, 'but if 'tis so, 'tis betther that way. The Lord made Adam first, but second thoughts is best,' says I.

"With that he put on his hat an' took the dollar and wint for the beer, for he is a good man, is me old Patrick, an' I niver had anny throuble with him since I promised to obey, which I niver did."

"And how did he like the party?" laughed Mrs. Mooney, who was enjoying the puzzled look on the face of her German friend.

"Sure," cried Mrs. Mahoney, "did ye iver know iv an Irish party that was

not a party? An' whin ye have just a sprinklin' iv Germans to hold it down a bit an' make a few pauses in the conversation, 'tis most harmonious. Afther we'd all passed the time iv day, an' raymimbered the weather iv last year, an' talked iv the slack times an' the cost iv things, thin I see it was the place an' the occasion to introduce a new idea. So I jumps up an' goes to the shelf for another lamp, an' finds the letther.

"'Sure, an' I forgot to give ye the letther, Pat,' says I, 'an' mebbe the company will be excusin' ye if ye break into it now, the envelop is that long an' important lookin',' says I.

"'Somebody writin' to me?' says me man with an innocent surprise, 'an' 'tis

not from the old country naythor, as I see be the mark.' An' with that we all looked at the outside, as folks mostly do whin letthers is oncommon.

"'What's the matter with openin' it, Pat?' says wan. 'It may be an invitation from the governmint to sweep the bullyvards be night for a modest competince.' 'Or a threat from the Black Hand if ye don't come down with ye'er fortune,' says another.

"Be that time we was all curious, an' I stood a little wan side to see the look on his face. It was worth it. I tell ye, it was worth it! There it was in his innocent hand. 'My heart beats true for you an' no other,' it says under the lace. Thin the shout wint up to the rafters.

"'Whose ye'er frind, Pat?' says wan.

"'Sure an' ye'er a sly old bird,' says another. 'Who'd have thought it?'

"'An' ye a dacent married man with wan wife an' childher growed an' settled, to be gettin' a fool's thing like that,' says Mrs. Greifen, she that was me German neighbor. She was a good woman in times iv sickness an' throuble, but she cud niver raise a laugh.

"Be that time Pat gets a little riled up. 'Whin a dacent man gets a contraption like that 'tis no sign he's the fool,' says he. ''Tis women that began the throuble in the world, an' 'tis women that kape it up,' says he, an' he flung the valentine to the floor.

"''Tis true,' says all the men at wanst, most vartuous like, 'we can't

help it whin the women falls in love with us.'

"I see it was time to take a hand. 'Patrick Mahoney,' says I, pickin' up the pretty valentine an' holding it afore his eyes, 'can ye look in the face iv ye'er true an' honorable wife an' swear ye know nothin' iv this?'

"'Can ye ask it?' says he, an' looks at me steady with the eyes iv a patient ox. Sure I cud have kissed him in sight iv the whole company — two gray-haired old fools — but I laughed instid an' turned to the secret mark at the bottom iv the verses. He looks at it dumb for a minute, an' thin all at wanst light breaks in his old face like the sunrise over a hill.

"'Will ye niver have done with ye'er

foolin'?' says he. Thin he stood up on his chair an' spoke with a voice like an alderman makin' a speech afore eliction. 'Ladies an' gintlemen,' says he, 'the valentine is from me own true love. The mark iv her is here, the same she used on me love-letthers afore she learned to write intelligint,' says he.

"'Ye'er lyin',' says I. 'Twas meself showed you how to write a love-letther, or I'd been waitin' for thim yet,' says I.

"With that the explanations followed an' the beer an' cakes wint round an' iverybody laughed except Mrs. Greifen. 'Twas hard times an' she cudn't get the joke."

"It was an Irish joke," said Mrs. Mooney.

"An' like an Irish joke it hit the mark," said Mrs. Mahoney. "The very next day me old man wint out cheerful like an' found a couple iv jobs just awaitin' to fall onto him."

"But the charity woman!" exclaimed Mrs. Hoesing. "You told her the money was for 'the universal need.'"

"Sure, an' that was no lie," replied the old woman.

A BIT OF LIFE

IV

A BIT OF LIFE

MRS. HOESING took up her knitting and walked around to the rear flat, where she found Mrs. Mahoney and Mrs. Mooney reading the death notices in the last evening paper.

"What makes you read such things?" she asked.

"Sure an' ye wudn't have all iv ye'er frinds die an' not know it?" cried Mrs. Mahoney.

"She just found one here," said Mrs. Mooney, "an old friend and neighbor."

"Not just a frind was he," said the old woman, "though I doubt not neighbors shud be frinds, an' frinds shud be neighbors, but 'tis a quare world at best an' things are not as they shud be."

"Has anybody died that you was neighbor to?" inquired Mrs. Hoesing anxiously.

"Wait till I get a bit iv tay in the cups, an' I'll tell ye," she replied.

"Ye can see be the paper here — 'Gustav Greifen, age fifty-five years, beloved husband iv Gretchen; father iv Conrad, Mary, Martha, John, an' Henry.' Will ye mind that! 'Beloved husband!' I knew him for a poor drinkin' brute that wud turn the hair iv a saint, but 'tis like that whin

we are gone. I'll be raymimbered for an angel wan iv these days, but that's nayther here nor there. 'Tis iv the childher I'm thinkin' now, an' the betther times for thim."

"Are any of them old enough to help?" asked Mrs. Hoesing.

"Sure, an' the boy Conrad had niver a chance to do annything else, what with the small childher and the drinkin' father. He was a good boy, was Conrad, an' he took his teachin' airly. Manny's the night I've slipped into the rear iv The Tiniment (we was in front thin), to see if they'd a bite for supper, an' there the good woman sat with her Sunday-school lesson on her lap an' the boy at her knee.

"'Blessed are the pure in heart,' says she to him.

"'Yes, mother,' says he, obedient like, for I niver see such a boy to mind.

"'Say it,' says she, an' the child says it, 'Blessed are the pure in heart.' With that he goes to bed, for the mother had to drag him out airly to sell papers before the school hour an' the poor lad had small time for play.

"Well, 'tis hard tellin' how to raise childher, for the boy that had the cares iv a man, an' wud be thinkin' iv his mother an' the rint, wud ye believe it? that boy grew steady an' dependable an' niver a trace iv the father in him, an' makin' twelve dollars a week. Faith, ye cud look into his eyes as ye look into a spring in the country an'

"BLESSED ARE THE PURE IN HEART"

see to the bottom. There was no mud in the spring.

"Thin wan day I see he was marked for trouble."

"How could you see it?" asked Mrs. Mooney.

"I see the girl in the tay-cup first an' aftherwards I see her. She was a slip iv a girl with eyes iv the mornin' an' a voice like a singin' bird callin' for a mate. An' the poor lad, he looked in the eyes iv her, an' he heard the voice iv her, an' the heart wint out iv him."

"And the poor mother that worked so hard to raise him, give him up just when she needed him most," said Mrs. Hoesing.

"Not so fast," continued the old woman. "Mothers ain't always so

aisy an' so it was this time. Mrs. Greifen said it wud niver do, seein' he had learned from the Lutheran book, an' the girl was a good Catholic. An' Mrs. O'Moore (her name was Sally) said it was not the plan iv the family to give Sally to a German lad with a drinkin' father an' a mother to take his wages on a pay day. An' Mrs. Greifen, she talked back that as for the drink, there was small use in the kettle callin' the pot black, which was true for ye. Mike O'Moore sildom got home with all his wages on a Saturday night, an' the wife iv him had a hard time with the pride that was born in her to kape up betther thin the neighbors. An' so Sally had to work in a store for three dollars a week, but

the mother put the most iv it on the girl's back, for she had it in her heart that Sally must marry well, an' she knew the way to catch the eye iv a promisin' youth.

"So there was hard words in the families, an' the young things met on the quiet, an' waited for betther luck. An' that is where all the throuble come from — the waitin'. 'Tis not nature to wait whin ye've found ye'er true mate, an' we old fools shud niver ask it."

"You wouldn't have children forget their duty to parents!" exclaimed Mrs. Hoesing.

"Poor things, what could they do?" asked Mrs. Mooney.

"Duty," resumed the old woman

with increased emphasis. "An' what cud they do? I'd have thim do as the birds do — begin the nest together, wan straw at a time till it's finished!

"Well, as I said, the long waitin' did it. Whin he had a dollar saved the littlest wan took the measles bad an' there was the medicine to buy. An' afther that John broke an arm jumpin' over the back fence — an' so it wint. She see he cudn't lay by annything, an' her mother throwed it up to her how he had a family ready made an' no more childher needed. Thin another lad come along. Have ye iver noticed, they'se always three parties to the course iv true love, an' that means throuble sure for wan iv thim. Sometimes it is two lads an' wan girl, an'

again it is two girls an' but wan lad for the two iv thim, but 'tis bad anny-way. The second lad was Irish an' the mother favored him. He'd no kin in the city an' soon to be a boss at fourteen dollars a week, so he said. Thin he was free with his money whin my poor lad cudn't kape his own wages, what with the drinkin' father an' the small childher.

"Thin wan day, it was afther the Christmas holidays, Sally come home an' told how she'd been laid off at the store, for nobody was buyin' anny-thing, havin' spent all the money in cilebration iv the blessed day, which is a way folks have. An' ivery mornin' she wint out to offer her pretty face for a payin' job, an' ivery night she come

back an' says they'se no call for more girls yet. Thin the father takes another drink, bad luck to him, an' he tells Sally to work or get married. The mother goes to Mrs. Greifen an' tells her no Germans need apply. Sally must marry Pat — that was the other wan. Mrs. Greifen ain't so sorry, havin' no love for the family. Thin Sally cries, an' Conrad, he looks like a child that's been struck an' don't know what for. By an' by, I think 'tis time to take a hand meself, though I doubt much interferin' iv the old wans in such a matter. So I carries a note from Conrad an' manages to get it to Sally whin I wint wan evenin' to tell thim a bit iv news."

"What was in the note?" asked Mrs. Mooney.

"How shud I know?" replied Mrs. Mahoney innocently. "I but glanced at it wanst to see it was the right kind to fetch her.

"Wurra, wurra! I thought it was patched up between thim an' so it seemed for a few days, but the old throuble was there. It was a hard winter for poor folks, an' in each family the man was drinkin' an' the wife tryin' to cover the shame, an' the poor childher lookin' for more work an' money.

"Thin the Irish lad, Pat, he gets obstreperous like a young colt that's half-broke, an' he puts it up to Sally. The next thing I know Mrs. O'Moore

has told all the neighbors iv her daughter's good luck. Conrad, he sits be the fire in the evenin' readin' the German paper upside down, an' I see his mother move around the room like she thought she had something to do, an' she stops an' smooths his hair with her big hand (he'd wan unruly lock on his pate), but they'se no talkin', for that is the way iv these Germans.

"Wan night, about a week before the weddin', which was bein' hurried something scandalous, the girl gets up at two o'clock an' slips out iv the door with a small bundle iv things an' comes to our Tiniment, an' calls softly to the lad sleepin' safe in his own bed. He hears the voice iv his heart, an' he gets up an' comes out to her."

"She was a bold thing an' a bad one to do that," said Mrs. Hoesing.

"You can't tell that," interrupted Mrs. Mooney. "When a girl's quick acting, it's no sign she's bad."

"Well, anyhow, she oughtn't to have done it," persisted Mrs. Hoesing.

"True for ye. There they was, the two childher, she cryin' out how they'd run away together that night an' not care for the old folks at all; he chokin' with the struggle in the soul iv him, for he was a good lad an' he loved the girl more thin common. Mebbe he thought about the mother whin she'd made him say, 'Blessed are the pure in heart.' I don't know. You see the play-writers for the theater always has a man think about his mother at the

right time. All I cud iver find out was this: the lad took her by the arm an' led her back safe to her father's house."

"But how did you know that much?" asked Mrs. Mooney.

"How did I know? The next mornin' the poor boy stops in the front before goin' to work an' asks me will I just run over an' see if Sally is sick this day. An' I puts on me thinkin' cap an' goes. I gets a little out iv her, and drags a mite out iv him, an' I goes from wan to the other iv those foolish young wans. Wurra! Wurra! 'Tis little it takes to spoil a young life, an' ye can niver spoil wan without ye touch another.

"She thinks his love has grown cold or he'd been willin' to risk annything

along with her. An' he acts like a piece iv his idol had broken down. I'm thinkin' it had, for he was a man, and raymimber this: a man niver forgets the smallest mistake iv a woman. Manny's the poor girl has found it true whin just wan minute iv foolishness from a burstin' heart has filled a cup iv sorrow for her to quench the thirst iv a lifetime."

Mrs. Mahoney paused. "I'm forgettin' me manners. Have another cup iv tay."

"But you haven't told us the end of the story," said Mrs. Hoesing.

"Haven't I! Bad luck to the German onderstandin'. Can't ye find it? I see her again whin I wint back wanst afther me an' the old man moved to

betther our financial prospects. She had two Irish babies in her arms, an' the look ye see on the face iv a woman that is weary with the seekin' afther something she can't find. An' me poor lad! Six feet iv solid German he was, fillin' the chair be the kitchen fire afther the day's work, readin' the German paper, with the big hand iv his mother smoothin' the wan unruly lock iv his hair."

"I don't like your story," complained Mrs. Mooney. "When you're tellin' one, why can't you make it come out right?"

"Story! faith an' it's no story at all I'm tellin' ye," cried the old woman. "'Tis a bit iv life."

THE WAY STATION

V

THE WAY STATION

MRS. GUILDHEIMER dropped her knitting and looked sharply at her daughter.

"You got no call to be too particular, Bertha. You have twenty-four years by you. If you don't look it now you will one day. Gottlieb Winderhagen is a man already and no foolishness about him. We'd give you a good wedding like your sisters had. We can yet afford it."

"Who'd help with the work if I did step off, mother?" replied Bertha, toss-

ing the dish towel over the rack. "I notice the girls don't come back to do it."

"Never mind," said the mother, impatiently. "Your father and I lived good before we had any of you."

Bertha smiled. "I guess you need me yet," she rejoined, with a brave effort, though she felt the smart of unshed tears.

The oldest of four daughters, Bertha had been left "to dance in the trough," according to the old saying lightly flung at the girl who allows her younger sisters to be married before she herself has secured a lover. Three years ago when she was helping her mother with the elaborate preparations for the first wedding supper, she had tossed her

head with a quick retort, for her generous soul felt no sting in the jest gaily passed from friend to friend. The second time she still held up her head, for the supper displayed her skill, she had partners for every dance, and all the married men had jovially offered "to recommend her." Last night the old joke seemed coarse. Every one took a hand in the attempted explanation of her unwedded state at the serious age of twenty-four years. She heard her father, whom she dearly loved, clumsily praising her many housewifely accomplishments to a group of stolid German men who were silently devouring large portions of her famous potato and onion salad, and she felt the keen eyes of her mother

jealously watching the popular girls still in their teens. Only one man, the unloved Gottlieb who could not dance, had offered her any marked attention.

"You remember last night," continued the mother, "when all the foolish girls went before you in the dancing."

"I could have danced more if I'd cared about it," began Bertha, stung to an unwonted self-defense, but she blushed guiltily and turned into her little bedroom.

Very still it seemed, this little room that would be hers alone now that the last of her sisters had gone. For a moment she stood, a drooping figure in the oppressive silence, then walked determinedly to the looking-glass. A round plump face, a mass of freckles

over the cheek-bones, a large mouth, and a snub nose — the reflection was clear and relentless. She opened the top bureau drawer and cautiously brought forth two pictures. One was a highly colored delineation of a young man and a beautiful girl standing close together before a spreading oak-tree in a red and green forest. The girl had long yellow braids like her own. He was tall and dark. One strong arm was clasped around her waist. With the free hand he was carving letters in the bark of the red and green oak. In the other picture a pale nun with upturned eyes and praying hands knelt beside a window that opened upon the cold beauty of a barren, snow-covered earth.

"Bertha!"

"Coming, mother."

"What do you find by yourself all the time? Sit down. We have something to settle. Here is one man who makes the offer — one man. Your father and I think it good. It is a chance for you. You are a good girl, Bertha, but you have not the beauty, and that's what the young fools these days must look for. Listen! You think to go on like this forever? The father and I will one day be gone. You must live then in a boarding house with these loud girls that wander up and down the streets by night when there is not a place for all to sit in a front room. And you must buy all the clothes from that store where you work,

the machine clothes with the buttons sewed on by a single thread and ready to drop off any minute, like no decent girl can wear. And then you have no man to come in to the hot supper and sit by the stove, and no children in your arms —"

"Don't, mother," interrupted the girl, catching her breath. Slowly the light of the brilliant forest faded into a gray winter night, and the girl with the long yellow braids and the strong arm around her waist melted into the supplicating figure of a pale nun.

"I'm through and I guess I'll go to bed early," she said wearily.

"It is not eight yet by the clock, and you have not told what stands against the man," persisted the mother.

"I — I — don't like him," faltered the girl.

"Ach, not already, but you will," declared Mrs. Guildheimer, in a more conciliatory tone. "Girls don't know what they want. He's a good man — no drinking, and a steady job. That is enough for any woman of sense."

Bertha looked at her mother pleadingly, but checked the impulse to ask if that had been enough when the father came wooing. Theirs had been a life of simple domestic joys and sorrows, commonplace, uneventful, and perhaps a little sordid, but to the girl who brooded in secret there had always been the instinctive feeling that the silent, homely, slow-moving father and the active, pretty, talkative mother

lived together because — well, just because in the mysterious order of things they belonged together. Although she could not have defined her conviction, she had felt sure of her own birthright, and in her dreams she saw children born of a love that had never come to her. Now this same mother, who must know, was asking her to marry a man repellent to every fiber of her being.

"Mother," she begged, "do you really mean that I must marry a man I don't — don't like?" She could not bring herself to say "love." That meant too much.

Mrs. Guildheimer hesitated. "Of course, child, it is my wish that you are happy, but it is not to be foolish at twenty-four. A girl MUST be mar-

ried. When she don't find it just right, she must make the best when something comes."

"But I can work, mother. I have proved that I can take care of myself."

"Ei, ei!" exclaimed the mother, losing all patience. "Such a foolishness! No woman makes it out to take care of herself. It shall not be so for you. It is not known in the family. I will again speak to the father tonight. It shall not be."

"I said I'd go to bed early and I guess I will," said the girl, seeing no other way to close the disagreeable subject.

"Not yet," ordered the mother quickly. "I hear some one coming."

Bertha ran to her bedroom.

"You know I cannot move from the chair," cried Mrs. Guildheimer. "The rheumatism is bad tonight."

The daughter returned at her mother's call and stood silent in the middle of the room. They were not the footsteps of a man, and she was free to share her mother's curiosity.

"Who can it be?" queried the mother, moving the lamp that she might shade her eyes and perhaps get a glimpse through the window.

"Ach! It is Mrs. Mahoney and Mrs. Mooney, the gadders!"

The two women knocked at the door and opened it before Bertha could reach them. They were a little breathless and carried an atmosphere of

excitement that met an immediate response in Mrs. Guildheimer.

"Somebody sick? and me fastened to this chair with the rheumatism."

"No, no," assured Mrs. Mahoney. "We're bearin' no bad news. We thought mebbe ye'd like to come over to the meetin'."

"It ain't just church," explained Mrs. Mooney in answer to the dazed look on the face of her German neighbor, "though Mrs. Hoesing will say it is the next thing to it, being somebody's kind of religion."

"What foolishness is it you talk about?" asked Mrs. Guildheimer impatiently.

"Ye haven't heard, an' here I was thinkin' all the neighbors had the first

news iv her an' nothin' left to tell," cried Mrs. Mahoney, joyfully; "but it's told in wan word. They'se a spiritualist woman — a - a clairvouyant — that's the name — an' she's rinted a room for the half iv a fortnight from Mrs. Hoesing. We're kapin' it dark. The City was afther her in the last place an' it wudn't do to let thim get the poor soul here, for she's a good woman I'm thinkin', if she is a bit off in her head, an' small wonder with bein' a widow an' six childer to feed."

Mrs. Guildheimer's ball of yarn slipped from her lap and rolled across the floor while she gazed in wide-eyed amazement at her visitors.

"And you will make something out for such a kind of woman!"

"But she's the real thing," interposed Mrs. Mooney. "There's a difference in those kind of people. She says so herself. It's cheap too — only twenty-five cents for a sitting and she'll talk half an hour without winking."

"I heard one of the girls at the store talking one day about getting her fortune told by somebody like that," observed Bertha, "but it cost fifty cents."

"It's all a great foolishness, and no money comes out from me," asserted Mrs. Guildheimer.

"Sure, an' she'll be afther tellin' us all about Bertha's weddin'. It might be worth more thin the quarther," suggested Mrs. Mahoney.

"How can she do it?" asked the mother, cautiously.

"I tried it to see for myself and I'm not so easy fooled," replied Mrs. Mooney. "She's taken the back room off the kitchen at Mrs. Hoesing's where the one window looks on the alley so it'll be dark. You go in there and find her in that little rocking-chair by the bed where she sits alone the whole living day. She never talks much when she ain't under the spell. You put questions on paper and fold them in and put them in her hand. Mind, she don't even see the questions. Then you just sit on the bed and wait. Pretty soon she drops off like she's in a kind of fainting fit, only just when you begin to get scared, she sits up and

talks a blue streak, answering all the questions on paper without once looking at them!"

"It's only twenty-five cents, mother," interrupted Bertha, trying to speak carelessly, "and it might relieve your mind to find out I ain't going to marry at all, but just stay here and take care of you and father when you're old."

"Ho, ho!" cried Mrs. Mahoney. "I've heard iv girls like ye afore this. It's a sign iv somethin'. Come on annyhow. 'Tis action that's wanted in this world, an' not overmuch thinkin'. She begins at seven o'clock, an' sure, they'se no harm at all. Bertha will know whin to look for the light or the dark complected man. The woman

found a lost pocket-book wanst, an' what's to hinder the findin' iv a man?"

"If I could get out from this chair," began Mrs. Guildheimer. "Bertha, bring the light shawl and the pocket-book."

She rose painfully, bending to rub her stiff knees, but Bertha knew that no hardening of the joints had as yet been serious enough to keep her mother in a chair if there was any sufficient reason for leaving it.

"We'll go on ahead and have her ready," said Mrs. Mooney. "There'd better not be too many go to the room at once."

"It's like the Irish to make some such a foolishness," grumbled Mrs. Guildheimer.

Bertha was too wise to speak. Gently she drew the mother's arm within her own and moved slowly across the street to The Tenement.

The curtain of the alley window was closely drawn. The strange woman sat in the cushioned rocking-chair, waiting for the young girl Mrs. Mahoney had promised to secure. To Bertha's excited gaze she appeared thin and colorless, with a blank expression in her pale blue eyes as if she looked and saw nothing.

"Fold the paper with the questions inside," the strange woman was saying, "and do not tell me what you write. It is not myself but the spirits of your beloved dead that speak through me."

"But — but — I have no one dead,"

said Bertha, suddenly struck by this need of a common sorrow that had passed by her young life.

"There is always some one to speak and tell us all that is good for us to know," answered the strange woman gently. "There is nothing to fear. Write."

Bertha bent her flushed face over the scrap of paper and wrote with a trembling hand:

"Tell me if I must always be bothered about my not marrying, because there is only one man wants me and I don't like him."

She hurriedly folded the paper in a tight little wad and thrust it into the woman's hand, feeling as if she had laid bare the holy of holies of the heart.

The strange woman rubbed the bit of paper between her two palms, and waited. Slowly the lids pressed down over the expressionless eyes, a convulsive shiver shook her body three times, and she fell back in the little rocking-chair, motionless as a leaf in the stillness that precedes a storm. Then a voice that seemed a thing apart from the human frame and unaffected by it fell softly on the frightened sense of the waiting girl.

"You are troubled. I see a light-complected man near you."

"Oh, I don't want to marry him," interrupted Bertha, with a sob.

"Of course you don't," continued the voice soothingly. "He is not the one for you. I see another man, tall and

dark. He is farther away, but he is looking in your direction. He will come."

Bertha was leaning forward with parted lips. "When?" she whispered eagerly. "When? Oh, please tell me when."

"You must wait. I cannot speak to him now. He is in the future. I can just see that he is coming. And there are flowers in your lap. That means you are a good girl and you will be happy. Be good and the spirits of the good will guide you. You will hear them speak."

"I — I — never hear anything," faltered the girl, looking fearfully around the little room.

"You will." The voice seemed

farther away. "I must leave you now."

"Oh stay, stay a little. It is yet so much to know," cried Bertha.

"It is enough," said the voice. This time it seemed to speak from the corner of the ceiling. "I am growing weary. You must release me. Tell me it is ended."

"It is ended," repeated Bertha obediently.

Again the convulsive shiver ran through the body of the strange woman, slowly the lids lifted over the pale blue eyes that looked at Bertha as one suddenly awakened from a sound sleep.

"I hope it was satisfactory," she said, handing back the slip of paper

unopened, and taking a flat purse from her pocket. "Sometimes we get more and sometimes less, but we must always trust that we get no more than is good for us to hear."

"Don't you really know what I wrote?" asked Bertha, eagerly.

"Certainly not," replied the strange woman, placing the quarter in her purse.

Bertha thrust the telltale bit of paper into her bosom with an overwhelming sense of relief. "Then no one needs to know," she thought.

"What did she say?" asked the group with one voice as Bertha came into the kitchen.

"Oh," replied Bertha, trying to speak lightly, "she said I must not

marry a light-complected man and that's all I need to know just now."

"Ei, ei," exclaimed Mrs. Guildheimer, reaching for her shawl. "She told you what was set in your own head, and nobody needed to get a quarter out from me to find that."

Mrs. Hoesing and Mrs. Mooney expressed their disappointment, but Mrs. Mahoney looked at the flushed face of the girl and smiled.

"'Tis enough, I'm thinkin'. The girl can kape the best iv it. 'Tis no need for the old fools to be pryin'."

Alone in her little bedroom, Bertha again opened the bureau drawer that concealed the two pictures. With a trembling hand she tore the white nun into fragments. For her all the beauty,

all the mystery of life was symbolized by the warmth of the lurid forest that held only the man and the woman. She knelt by the bed and recalled what the strange woman had spoken.

"Be good and the spirits of the good will guide you. You will hear them speak."

"I will be good," she sobbed. "I will be good, and I will listen. I will listen now."

Then in the stillness of the night, to her straining ears the whisper of another soul seemed to reach her own: "I am coming. Wait for me!"

WHY WE MARRY

VI

WHY WE MARRY

AFTER a year's absence the pretty Polish girl had come back to the neighborhood, a deserted wife, with a baby in her arms.

"God help her," exclaimed Mrs. Mooney, "but she had a right to know what the fellow was like afore she married him. I'm sure I knowed Tom."

"Poor soul, but 'tis the way iv women," said Mrs. Mahoney, shaking her old head, "an' there's small help for it. We're all fools about the men whin it comes to that."

"That's true for you," interrupted Mrs. O'Leary, shifting her baby to the left arm to make room for the two-year-old child at her knee. "Many's the time I've said to myself, 'Sarah O'Leary, if you was a girl again, you'd stay a girl.'"

"No you wouldn't," said Mrs. Hoesing. "I could tell you all why we marry, but I'm fearing it's a long story."

"A story, a story from the German!" cried Mrs. Mooney.

"Start in," ordered Mrs. Mahoney, "it's not always ye're doin' the talkin'."

Each woman settled into the comfortable attitude of the listener and awaited the story with a childlike interest. Mrs. Hoesing clasped her

large hands over one knee and began. "You know we come from Germany when I was but a slip of a girl, though you wouldn't think it now from the size of me. It's over there they know the story. My grandmother told it to my mother when my father would come home with the drink in him. And one day my mother had to tell it to me."

The women all nodded in sympathy. Every one in the block knew of Mrs. Hoesing's patient loyalty to her brutal husband.

"The story is in one of the old books that tells about the Christ and the disciples — how they went walking and preaching about the country," she continued.

"In our Bible?" asked Mrs. O'Leary.

"No," replied Mrs. Hoesing slowly. "Not rightly there, nor in ours neither. Some folks say it's true and some say it's all made up, so it never got into any Bible, but it's just the same. It's the words of Christ and we must abide 'em."

"Bring on your story and we'll tell you when it's true," said Mrs. Mooney.

"I'm slow at starting," began Mrs. Hoesing, "but it was this way. One day Christ and one of his disciples (I don't rightly remember which one) was a-walking and a-walking to find a certain town and they missed the right road. They come to a field of golden grain a-waving in the sun, and Christ said: 'The harvest is ripe. There be reapers in the field. We will ask of them the way.' So they went into

the field, and there lay a man in the shade of some bundles of grain. He was stretched out flat on his back, and he never moved when they come up, but Christ knowed for certain the man was awake, because he could see through every one, even to a body's thinking. So Christ said to the man so comfortable in the shade, 'My good man, can you tell us the road to the town?' naming the place he was after, which place I've forgotten.

"And will you believe it! That man never so much as spoke a word. He just stretched out his right leg and wriggled his big toe in the direction of the road!"

"God save us!" gasped Mrs. Mahoney. "The narve iv him!"

"Yes," asserted Mrs. Hoesing as if she expected contradiction. "You wouldn't hardly believe it, but that's all he'd do. He was just so lazy and good-for-nothing. Christ said, 'We thank you.' Then the disciple was mad and wanted the man punished for his disrespect, but Christ said, 'Let be,' and they went on. A little way from the lazy man there was a young woman and she was up and working hard, cutting grain and singing an old song like women do when they are young and happy."

"Before they are married," interposed Mrs. O'Leary.

Mrs. Hoesing did not heed the interruption. "She was singing and you could hear her all over the field like

the birds sing in the morning in the country. And the disciple says to Christ: 'I do not trust the man. He would never sing at his work. Let us ask the woman.' And Christ agreed, for he knew just what he was about all the time. So they called to the woman and asked the way, and she stopped her work and went with the sickle in her hand clean out of the field of waving grain and put them on the right track. Then Christ said, 'We thank you,' but the disciple did not understand, and he says to Christ: 'Must they receive the same, the lazy man and the willing woman? Master, why don't you do something for the woman?'

"Christ answered," here Mrs. Hoesing lowered her voice, "you wouldn't

believe it, but Christ said, 'She shall marry that man!'"

"Mother iv God," cried Mrs. Mahoney.

"Is it a true story you're tellin'?" asked Mrs. Mooney in awestruck tones.

"It's true for us," moaned Mrs. O'Leary. "I don't need to be asking that."

"The disciple didn't understand," continued the story-teller, "for he was a poor human like the rest of us, and he says, decided like, 'She won't do it'; and Christ said: 'Yes she will. She will marry that man because he needs her. Sometimes it is the man and sometimes the woman that needs most, but whichever way it is, the weak must mate with the strong. It is the law

that I have made and so it will always be in the world.'"

There was a moment of silence. Then a sob broke from Mrs. O'Leary. Mrs. Hoesing put out a sympathetic hand.

"The word of Christ must be right," she said slowly, "and so that's how we know, if we've a hard life, it's because the Law of Christ has found us strong."

THE GLORY OF THE MAN

VII

THE GLORY OF THE MAN*

THE hour hand of the little open face clock on the shelf above the sink was close to four. Mrs. Casey thought it might be anywhere from twenty-five to ten minutes short of that hour. For reasons unknown to her, nothing could go on in an exact way in the Casey household, and so she was not surprised when the minute hand of the clock became loose without cause, and dropped into a crack behind the sink. Neither did

*From *The Bellman*, April 2, 1910

she marvel that, on this particular day in November, the baby suddenly clenched his tiny fists and screamed during the two hours of the afternoon she had set aside for the completion of the family washing. With an apathy born of days of physical weariness and mental depression, she laid the exhausted baby on the bed and went back to the washtub. She knew that washing must be done at any cost. Her husband hated the sight of those tubs when he came in cold and hungry, and she must manage to get them out of the way, even if supper was late.

But the fate that often attaches to cheerless days in November was against her. Mr. Casey found the drizzling rain and the slippery mud an

increasing obstacle in his work of sweeping the public highway, and was forced to stop an hour earlier than usual. This misfortune brought his heavy step to the back door of the third landing just as Mrs. Casey, after a second look at the hour hand, reached the anxious conclusion that it couldn't be more than half past four.

"It's no use; I couldn't help it, Jim," she began in answer to the scowl on his face.

"Who's talking? I ain't," he growled.

"You'd just as well talk as look that way," she replied. "You don't know nothing about it; and what's more, you never will learn. The baby's

been crying all the afternoon, every blessed minute; and the tubs standing and the water getting cold and the children tracking in and out, and my back aching like it would break in two in the middle. I wish it would, and end it. You'd marry somebody that might please you — for a while."

"You bet I would," he replied grimly.

The quick tears rose to her eyes, and fell into the suds below her bent head.

"Don't snivel," commanded the husband. "Things are bad enough without that."

Mrs. Casey raised her head. "Suppose you quit talking and go to work and help. You've got an hour. Your

day won't be so long's mine, anyhow. I'll have the dishes to wash after supper, and the children to clean up for bed, and like as not the baby will cry half the night. He's that fretful with his teeth."

Mr. Casey took his hat from the nail, where he had so recently hung it.

"That's right," said the wife. "Go to Murphy's and spend your money treating them lazy loafers over there. You know the children need shoes; the rent'll be due day after tomorrow, and the butcher refused credit today; but such things don't bother you. Oh, no!"

"You'd drive a man to Hell," he muttered, reaching for the door knob.

The wind rattled the loose casings,

and drove the sleet in a straight line against the window panes.

"Shall I go, or stay?" he asked. "You know it's up to you."

"No, it ain't," she replied coolly.

He looked at her, with the surprise of a man to whom the unexpected rarely comes. Scenes like this had been frequent in their lives since she had discovered the exact amount of his daily wage, and, by a simple process of subtraction, had been able to estimate the loss due to Murphy's. He was familiar with the part each one played up to this point, but the leading lady had evidently forgotten her lines. It was her wont to falter after the first irritable outburst, and beg him to stay in at the price of her silence.

"I say, it's up to you," he repeated in a louder tone.

"No, it ain't," she retorted, without raising her voice.

"What do you mean?"

"What I say. I'm willing to see you get your share of drink like any other man that works; but when it comes to letting you pay for the drinks of a lot of saloon loafers, for no cause but to make folks think you've got a full pocket, I ain't going to keep still about it."

"You know I ain't going to stand chin-music. If you shut up I stay in. You know that." Mr. Casey re-hung his hat on the nail. He felt he had gained his point. The scene had always ended with this ultimatum.

But the spirit of rebellion had been crushed too often. "I didn't say I'd shut up." She spoke with an exaggerated calmness, quite unlike her usual tearful pleadings.

"You'd better say it," he commanded threateningly.

"I ain't going to," she replied steadily.

Mr. Casey looked at his wife without comprehension. He had frequently told her not to "snivel"; but he began to think a tearful and submissive wife was more comfortable than one bright-eyed and openly defiant.

"Did anybody ever see such a looking place as this for a tired and hungry man to come to?" he asked. He

knew he was touching a sore spot, and waited for the tears to start.

"Whose fault is it?" she flashed back at him. "Whose fault is it, I say, that we're cluttered up in three rooms with never so much as a single clothes-closet or a wardrobe to put anything out of the way? The money you spend for the drink would put us on our feet and pay rent for a decent place."

"You'd keep it in the same way," he said brutally.

"Try me."

"Not on your life."

Both stopped for a moment and looked at the wretched place they called home; the man with the air of one who has been cheated out of his

unquestioned rights, the woman with a miserable sense of injustice sharpened by the futility of her position.

The kitchen, which served as a dining and sitting room, was dreary enough under the most favorable circumstances, but on a rainy washday a double line of wet clothes hung back of the stove and filled the rooms with damp odors. A motley collection of shoes, caps, coats, and unmended trousers made an ugly heap in one corner near a bushel basket filled with potatoes and turnips. The table was covered with a confused array of dishes and kitchen utensils, there being too little space in the tiny pantry to admit of an orderly arrangement of both dishes and food. A

small door between the stove and the sink opened into a room, large enough to hold two beds and leave an open space of three feet between them. The one decoration of this room was the wedding certificate, framed in white and gold, and bearing below a pair of clasped hands, the solemn assurance of the union of Aileen Mullen and James Casey in the holy bonds of matrimony.

"Nice home for an American man," he remarked.

"I'm just as much American as you are," she reminded him; "and it's worse for me."

"Do you think I'm responsible for your kind of housekeeping?" he asked, giving a vicious kick at the pile of soiled clothes near the tub.

"Yes, you are, Jim Casey. It's your fault we can't live decent like other folks, that's got no more than we have, if we'd just spend it right."

"So you've got back to that again. Now look here. I've told you for the last time to shut up or I'd leave. Are you going to quit?"

"No, I ain't. I ain't going to quit so long's you keep throwing up to me how things look when you're the one to blame. I've stood it long enough."

"All right," he replied. "Then you'll take what's coming. That's all."

Mrs. Casey looked up with a sudden premonition of danger; but she could not help the challenge, "I'm ready."

Mr. Casey preserved his own dig-

nity by allowing her to have the last word. This was less difficult, because he had reached a sudden decision. He took up his penny paper and began to read.

There was a noisy sound of quarreling in the bedroom. "Katie, can't you keep the children quiet?" called Mrs. Casey. "Seems to me I've had about enough today."

"They're hungry," pleaded Katie.

"Time to eat," cried the boy.

"You'd better start supper and fill 'em up with something. I want to get out early." Mr. Casey spoke comfortably.

With the old docility that had for the moment deserted her, Mrs. Casey left her tubs and went about the

preparation of the supper. It was the same thing every night; a bit of fried meat, fried potatoes, a puffy loaf of baker's bread, the molasses that took the place of butter and proved far cheaper in the course of the week, and the strong tea turned from the pot that had been simmering at the back of the stove since noon.

It was a silent meal, save for the rattle of knives and the noisy eating of the children.

"You ain't going out?" ventured Mrs. Casey, as her husband rose from the table.

"Yes," he replied, "and what's more, I ain't coming back."

"You're joking," said Mrs. Casey feebly.

Mr. Casey smiled. "You thought I didn't mean what I said, when I told you to shut up or you'd take what's coming."

Mrs. Casey turned pale. In an instant she had realized that she had never tested him before. She had always been the one to surrender. A bitter cry rose to her lips, the age-old cry of the woman in the face of the primitive tyranny of the man; but she made no sound. A swift intuition, the unlooked-for guidance that sometimes reaches a woman in a crisis, had come to her.

"You will need some clean clothes to take with you," she said calmly.

"Oh, that's all right. You needn't bother. Make 'em over for the kids."

"You'd better take a few," she persisted, and went to the chest of drawers to select socks and faded shirts.

The man looked around uneasily, then sat down on the nearest chair. There was no hurry, and she evidently was not going to make a fuss. Perhaps she was glad to get rid of him. The thought struck him unpleasantly.

"If you don't want that paper, I can tie the things up in that." She stood before him with the bundle. He took it from her awkwardly and rolled the newspaper around it.

"Seems to be clearing up a little," she remarked, wiping the steam from the window pane, and peering through the glass.

He followed her to the window and looked out.

"Guess I'll be going. I ain't got too much time. There's a freight comes along at the crossing about half past seven. I'll catch a ride on that."

"Mebbe I'll walk to the crossing with you and see you off," she suggested.

"I can't wait," he said, impatiently.

"It won't take more'n a minute. I'll just run down stairs and ask old Mrs. Mahoney to come up and stay with the children till I get back."

She ran out quickly and left him to look around the room he was leaving; the unfinished washing, the children still at the table eating bread and molasses. She had never been known

to leave the home under like conditions. In spite of her poor housekeeping he knew she was always at it. What was she going to do? Then a sense of the grim humor of it all seized him. He remembered that the Aileen Mullen he used to know had kept more than one fellow guessing. She was the only one that had ever given him a sense of uncertainty. All the others he had been so sure of. That was long ago. Seven years of married life had taught him what to expect. Now he sat down and waited, with a new feeling of interest in the next move she would make.

She came back without delay, bringing a gust of cold, damp air with her as she opened the door.

"Mrs. Mahoney 'll be up in a minute. I'll get my things on."

She flew to the bedroom and pulled a box from under the bed. There lay the long, black cloak, shabby with the wear of seven years, and the felt hat trimmed with the drooping feather that had been her pride. Once she stopped to look in the little mirror that hung below the clasped hands of the marriage certificate. Then, in anticipation of the cold wind, she pulled her hands up into the sleeves of her cloak, a movement that gave her shoulders a squared look, as if she were ready for whatever might come.

"All right," she announced.

Mrs. Mahoney came in with a little grunt of disgust. "An' whativer has

come to ye two, to be sure, takin' a night like this for a pleasure thrip, whin the rain fair soaks through yer bones an' chills the marrow?" She looked from one to the other. "Ye are that mysterious," she muttered good-naturedly; "but ye'll be back before tin?"

"Mamma," wailed the baby, tumbling from his chair as he caught sight of her cloak and hat.

She picked him up and smiled. "Mamma's coming back. She won't leave baby." He clutched her hair with one tiny hand and pressed his face into her neck. The man shifted uneasily from one foot to the other.

"If you're going, come on," he said.

"You'll be good children." She

turned at the door and smiled at them, and together they went out into the rain.

"Other folks out, too," she observed.

"Where's everybody going to?" he questioned.

As they turned the corner, the sound of gay music smote their ears. In one of the open spaces on Ashland avenue, backed up against a row of uniform cottages, a small circus tent flaunted its gorgeous sign by the light of a flaring torch. A hoarse ticket seller stood in an open wagon, shouting the wonders of the show to the moving mass of men, women, and children, jostling, laughing, pushing, all eager to leave their quarters in his outstretched hand. Jim Casey felt the contagion of the crowd.

"What do you say to going in?" he asked, feeling in his pockets.

"Just as you like," she answered; but her heart gave a leap as he turned and drew her in the direction of the laughing throng, each step bearing them farther from the crossing.

Inside there were signs that the show had already begun.

"Just look at that clown, Jim, two of 'em," she cried, clutching her husband's arm. "Wouldn't you die laughing at him?"

"Look at the horses coming on," he responded. "Say, I'd like a few. What would I do with 'em? Well, say. If I'd a pair of beauties like them to do teaming we'd be coming to the show regular."

"We — we used to come," she gasped; and stopped, frightened at the ghost of past joys her words conjured up.

Some thought of long ago faintly stirred in the heart of Jim Casey; and he looked at his wife, still clinging nervously to him, lest she should slip from the narrow bench.

"Seems as if we did use to get out oftener," he admitted, looking at the newspaper bundle in his lap.

"It's — it's the baby's teeth that keep me in," she said.

"That's a good band," he observed. "Makes the horses step lively."

"They're playing the song I like, Jim."

"What's that?"

"'Love Me and the World is Mine.'"

Together they listened, clowns and horses for the moment forgotten. The music rose triumphant in that popular refrain, horns, clarinets, drums, with a final clash of cymbals united in a ringing defiance to any fate, "Love Me and the World is Mine."

"Say, Aileen," exclaimed Jim, "we ain't going to hurry. We're going to take in this whole blamed thing from start to finish, side-shows and all."

"And—and the train?" she faltered, not daring to look at him.

"Who's talking? I ain't," he answered. "Look! look up there! How did those fellows get onto that trapeze, and we not see 'em?"

CASE NUMBER 1199

VIII

CASE NUMBER 1199

MARIAN ISABEL CURTIS finished an early breakfast with the pleasing consciousness that this was to be one of her busy days. An active, college-trained girl, she had ceased to enjoy the year of social dissipation and idleness that followed her graduation, and it was with a keen sense of renewed life that she found herself actually enrolled with the workers of the world. Not that she had been allowed to secure any remunerative employment. There was

a family tradition that made it impossible for Marian Isabel Curtis to be counted in a census of women engaged in gainful occupations, but this fact added to the importance of her position as a volunteer friendly visitor for one of the charitable societies of the city. To visit the poor and needy, to guide the erring, to be a part of this great work for the general uplift of humanity — these thoughts stirred to their depths the unused powers of the potential woman. At last she had found her place in the world, and as she stood before the long mirror to stick another jeweled pin into her latest hat, she was ready for any self-renunciation, even to the wearing of a little black bonnet with white strings tied stiffly under her chin.

She walked briskly down the unfamiliar street that led to The Tenement, wondering at the unsavory odors that seemed to fill the air like a fog, and halting at each block to consult her little note-book for the exact location of "Case Number 1199."

"Carelessness at the office! Every case should be marked 'front' or 'rear,' and whether upstairs or down," she said aloud after Mrs. Hoesing had sent her to the back door to be interviewed by Mrs. Mahoney, who assumed the rôle of investigator before giving the desired information.

She climbed the first flight of stairs and paused. "Old couple, Scotch, sick man, no children, no income, send man to hospital," she reflected, recalling the

abbreviated facts given her at the office of the society.

"Come in," she heard a voice call faintly in response to her quick knock at the door. She knocked again.

There was a sound of some one moving slowly and heavily. Then the door opened and a woman of about sixty-five years, stout, erect, and fair, stood before her.

"This is Mrs. McBride?"

"Yes," replied the woman, without moving from the threshold.

"I am Miss Curtis. I have just been appointed the friendly visitor for this district. Of course I may come in?"

Mrs. McBride hesitated a moment, but stepped back into the room and

"THIS IS MRS. McBRIDE?"

went through the form of wiping the dust from a spotless chair.

It was a pleasant day in May, but the room with its closed windows seemed hot and stifling. Miss Curtis rose suddenly and pulled at the nearest window.

"Don't, don't," protested Mrs. McBride. "He can't stand the stench of the Yards today."

She tiptoed softly across the room to the sagging couch where Donald McBride lay sleeping and deftly covered him with the star-pattern patchwork quilt. The sick man stirred. "I'll come back to you, Jean. I'll come back."

"Yes, yes," she replied in the soothing tones one uses with a fretful child.

"I know you'll come back, but you better not be talkin'."

"He keeps sayin' that," explained Mrs. McBride, returning to her chair, "an' talkin' queer in his sleep."

"I should think he would die in this close room," said Miss Curtis. "Don't you know he ought to be in a hospital?"

"Sh — sh" — Mrs. McBride raised a warning finger. "We've no use for a hospital. He needs me to take care of him, an' I'm goin' to do it."

"But, Mrs. McBride," persisted the friendly visitor, "you know a hospital means fresh air (it is bad outside today) and good food and a nurse. You can't give him these things. You understand we heard you were in need and I

was sent to see what plans had better be made."

"I can't make any plans now," said the old woman stiffly, "not so long's my husband stays sick."

"Oh, but that is just the reason for talking things over," continued Miss Curtis. Then she looked at her watch. She was wasting time. "Really, Mrs. McBride, what do you expect to do? I was given this case at the office with the information that your husband was ready for the hospital and you had no means of support."

"I don't know who give it to you," said Mrs. McBride indignantly.

"You mean you are not in want and there is no reason for my being here?"

"I see no reason. The neighbors are willin'."

"The neighbors!" exclaimed Miss Curtis. "You don't mean you're dependent on the neighbors!"

Mrs. McBride drew herself up another half-inch. "We're always good to each other in times of trouble."

"But what on earth can the neighbors do? They're all — that is, of course they must have their own families to look after."

The old woman was silent.

"Of course the neighbors would be kind in the beginning," continued Miss Curtis, "but tell me, honestly, Mrs. McBride, have you any one to depend on now that your husband is sick?"

Confronted with the direct question, Jean McBride dared not tell a lie.

"No," she replied, defiantly.

"Have you anything laid by for a rainy day?"

"Nothing."

"Is there anything coming in except what the neighbors choose to give?"

"Not a thing."

The friendly visitor was mystified. Perhaps the old woman was a fraud. She must have something somewhere or she could not refuse aid in the face of sickness and poverty. Of the unrecorded charity that lives among the poor, Marian Isabel Curtis knew nothing.

"Of course it is always possible to cut down expenses," she suggested with

a glance towards a closed door. "Since there are only two of you perhaps fewer rooms —"

"I've lived in this town twenty years," interrupted Mrs. McBride, with dignity, "an' I've always had a front room."

She rose and opened the door. The quick rush of cold air made her sneeze violently. Miss Curtis saw in quick succession the large figures in the red ingrain carpet, the fireless stove in the center of the room, the stiff chairs with their crocheted tidies, the picture of Robert Burns hung above an old plush sofa, and the wax flowers under the glass case on the little table. She knew little of the standards of the neighborhood nor of the depths of

poverty to which one must sink before resigning the luxury of a front room.

"We all have to give up things at times," said Miss Curtis. "I know it's hard. I've done it myself."

"What was it you give up?" asked the old woman grimly; "a trip to Europe or an autymobile?"

"Oh, it was something greater than either of those," replied Miss Curtis, trying to laugh; "but now do be reasonable. How are you going to live? You surely cannot expect —"

"We're expectin' nothing!" said Mrs. McBride firmly.

Miss Curtis rose to go. "I must see another case. I'll come tomorrow. You think about having your husband

go to the hospital. I know you'll decide I'm right. Good-by."

She walked quickly down the stairs, past the watchful eye of Mrs. Mahoney and the silent curiosity of Mrs. Hoesing, out into the noisy street with its multitude of children and sickening odors.

"I certainly must think this out," she said to herself. "That old woman has got to be managed."

The following day found Marian Curtis alive with a new resolution. She had thought it out to the end. She had had a preconceived notion that poverty and a certain kind of docility must go hand in hand. She had not been prepared to meet resistance, pride, and an absurd clinging to an independence that no longer

existed. There was but one thing to be done. Her dealings with this singular character must be marked by firmness and prompt action. People who would not be reasonable must be made to be reasonable. She walked nervously to the rear of The Tenement, wondering how she should broach the plan for whose execution she was already prepared. A vision of Mrs. McBride, stout and stubborn, rose up in her mind, and she reached the door with a sudden fear that the old woman might prove unmanageable.

"Mrs. McBride," she began at once, "I really can't waste time today. You don't know how much better off your husband would be in a hospital."

The old woman shook her head and placed a finger cautiously on her lips. The old man was still dozing on the sagging couch as if he had not left it since the day before.

"He's wantin' nothin'," she said.

Today one window was open to catch a cool breeze from the West. A confusion of unexpected sounds rose from the street — the roll of wheels mingled with the shrill voices of children and the babble of women's tongues in many languages.

"What's that?" asked Mrs. McBride, taking a step towards the window.

Marian Curtis blushed as she intercepted the old woman and opened the door to admit two young men

dressed in white and bearing a hospital stretcher.

"This is the flat," she said in answer to their inquiring look.

"Tell 'em they've got the wrong place," said Mrs. McBride. "But I wonder now who's sick in the block —" Then she looked from one to the other and turned pale. "What right have you?" she asked sternly.

Miss Curtis felt the clash of wills and trembled for an instant.

"Your husband is going to the hospital, Mrs. McBride." She spoke with an impressive deliberation and pressed the old woman back into her chair.

"No, he ain't. He can't. He don't want to. He's too sick to know.

What right have you?" — Mrs. McBride rose with unwonted swiftness and pushed past her friendly visitor to the hospital attendants.

"He's my husband. I've always took care of him. They'll never know in a hospital what he's wantin'. They'll never know. They'll never know," she reiterated piteously.

The young men paused and looked toward Miss Curtis who stood unrelenting with her hand still on the door-knob.

"Oh, it will be all right; come now," said the younger man soothingly.

They were not unaccustomed to scenes like this, to the fears, protests, and ravings of impotent poverty.

The old woman bent over her husband. "Donald?" "Donald?"

"There's trouble brewin', Jean, but I'll come back. I'll come back."

It was the work of a moment for skilful hands. "You can always see him twice a week — Wednesdays and Saturdays" — called back one of the young men kindly, as they passed out of the door, which closed behind them with a decisive movement.

Miss Curtis drew a long breath as she listened to the distant sound of the ambulance bell and the gradual cessation of the murmurs in the street below.

"Poor old thing, but it had to be done," she said to herself, looking a little anxiously at Mrs. McBride, who had dropped back into her chair, overwhelmed by the unexpectedness of the attack and the cool front of her enemies.

"Now cheer up, Mrs. McBride. Remember you want the best thing for your husband, and he's got it. I'll come to see you again about your plans —"

"My plans! My plans!" cried the old woman, getting on to her trembling legs. "Do you think I've any plans apart from *him?* Sit down there." She pointed imperiously to her own chair and took her stand by the closed door with one shaking hand on the knob. "Now you are settin' in my place an' I'm standin' in yours. It's my turn, an' you've got to take it. We're poor, an' that give you a chance to meddle. Do you know why we've got nothin', an' old age comin' on? All we'd saved was in the bank that

broke. I can't rightly tell who's got the money, but them that took it on trust don't seem to lose nothin'. Do you know why my little girl died? It was the bad milk I paid for that give her the fever. Do you know why we lost our boy, that would have been strong to help us now? The doctor said 'twas the plumbin' out of order that the landlord wouldn't fix, no matter how we begged him, and him with a full pocket."

"You will make yourself sick," interrupted Miss Curtis. "It does no good to talk of these things now."

"No, it does no good," the old woman cried, "an' it does no good for the likes of you to come here. You belong to the folks what does the

wrong. You take the loaf that is ours today, an' tomorrow you come back with a crumb for charity. Do you think to patch it up that way?"

She moved painfully over to the empty couch and dropped on her knees beside it, closing both arms around the pillow still moist from the warmth of the head that had pressed it.

"He's gone," she moaned, "he's gone. All I'd left in the world, an' they'll be givin' him the 'Black Bottle.'"

"What do you mean?" asked Miss Curtis irritably. "Do try to be reasonable. They will give him the care he needs."

"No, no," sobbed the old woman, "it's folks like us who knows. I mean

the 'Black Bottle' they always keep at a hospital for them that's poor and can't get well. There's death in it!"

Miss Curtis looked at the pathetic figure on the floor. "It is all nonsense, I tell you," she said patiently. "I never heard of anything so absurd. They don't kill people at hospitals. They make them well. Now just cheer up. I must be going. We needn't talk any more today, but I'll be in tomorrow."

"No," replied Mrs. McBride wearily, "there's no need for more talk, an' you needn't come again. I'm thinkin' I can make my own plans."

The friendly visitor left the house with a curious sense of defeat. Not knowing what else to do, she allowed

three days to pass before considering the next step in the development of her "case." The old man was safe at the hospital and she contented herself by deciding that while the old woman was becoming used to the separation from her husband, the generosity of the neighbors, of which she had had a glimpse, would relieve present material needs. Tuesday morning, her natural love of carrying any undertaking to a successful close grew strong within her, and she felt that the end of the week must see Mrs. McBride subdued to the point of considering any proposition entertained for her welfare. Before starting out she stepped to the telephone, thinking to gain from the hospital some news of the sick man's

comfortable condition that would prove how right she had been in this matter. The first words brought a flush of surprise to her face.

"What! you don't mean he's gone home?"

"Yes. He went Sunday afternoon."

"I do not understand it. Who came after him? This is Miss Curtis. I made arrangements to have you keep him. I do not see what right you had to let him go."

"We had no right to keep him. A big, convincing chap named Casey came after him. He said the old man was his father and he could take care of him as long as he lived. The man can't last more than a month, and we never hold such cases when there is

the smallest chance of comfort at home."

"But there isn't the smallest chance. It's a plain case of direst poverty. Somebody has to support them. Moreover, they haven't any son."

There was a touch of impatience in the next reply suggesting that the conversation might be brought to an abrupt close.

"The young fellow, Casey, took pains to show me ten dollars raised by the neighbors in twenty-five cent subscriptions. He may or may not be a son. It doesn't matter. The old man won't live long enough to need ten dollars' worth of anything, and he wanted to die at home."

Miss Curtis sat down irresolutely on

the nearest chair. Then she drew out her hatpins and flung the bit of finery on the table. The toe of one little shoe tapped the floor nervously.

"Tricked, Marian Curtis. Outwitted in your own game!"

The absurdity of the situation impressed her and she laughed softly to herself. Then she readjusted her hat and started out once more in the outward capacity of a friendly visitor. She knew she was beaten, yet a curiosity mingled with a secret admiration for the obstinacy of the old woman and the cleverness of her neighbors overcame her chagrin and made it necessary to her to get another glimpse of the doings of these strange people. It seemed a curious world apart from her own.

Perhaps she did not wholly understand it!

She reached the rear of The Tenement and encountered Mrs. Mahoney sitting in the leisurely attitude common to the unemployed of the back door-step.

Miss Curtis felt instinctively the need of being on friendly terms with the Irishwoman.

"Good afternoon," she said cheerfully.

"Good afternoon, ma'am."

"I learned from the hospital that Mr. McBride was brought home by one of the neighbors," said Miss Curtis, sitting down upon the lower step.

"Sure, he's at home," assented Mrs. Mahoney, "dyin' comfortable an' takin'

his time to it with his wife beside him as she shud be."

"Who went after him?"

"Jim Casey."

"Who is Jim Casey?"

"Jim? Oh, he lives in The Tenement, third up, in the back."

"But he said Mr. McBride was his father."

Mrs. Mahoney's wrinkled face lighted up and her eyes sparkled. "Did he now? Sure, an' that was good iv him."

"But it wasn't the truth," said Miss Curtis, seriously. "You know it wasn't the truth, and if he hadn't said that they wouldn't have let him go at the hospital."

"I'm thinkin' the boy was near

right," said Mrs. Mahoney, calmly. "'Twas on a Sunday Jim brought the old man home. Don't ye always hear on that day how we're all mimbers iv wan great family? Sure, an' what was to hinder Jim in bein' anny relation that took his fancy?"

Miss Curtis looked for a moment at the bent old figure with the clear blue eyes and the yellow-white hair, and felt that it was no time for pure logic.

"Well, if it's all in the family," she laughed, "tell me what relation do I hold to the old man?"

"Faith, an' ye haven't found out," replied Mrs. Mahoney, good-naturedly.

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